

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ANKARA 02684 091212Z

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TU, GR, CY, US

SUBJ: COMMENTS ON TURKISH-GREEK TENSIONS

EUCOM FOR J-2 AND POLAD

SUMMARY: THIS CABLE ASSESSES CURRENT DISPUTE BETWEEN
TURKEY AND GREECE AND MAKES SUGGESTIONS FOR U.S. STANCE.

END SUMMARY.

1. MOST ENCOURAGING ELEMENT IN CURRENT TURKISH-GREEK
TENSIONS IS THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAVE PUBLICLY STATED
WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS THEIR DISPUTE. IT IS ALSO ENCOURAGING

SECRET

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PAGE 02 ANKARA 02684 091212Z

THAT GOT HAS NOT RESPONDED IN KIND TO GOG TROOP MOVEMENTS

IN THRACE.

2. CONFLICTING AEGEAN OIL CLAIMS, INVOLVING BOTH NEW SOURCES OF WEALTH AND HISTORIC RIVALRY, PROBABLY ARE CONSIDERED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS TO BE WORTH HIGH RISKS. NEVERTHELESS, CONFLICT IS NOWHERE NEAR FLASH POINT. NEITHER GOVERNMENT YET KNOWS HOW MUCH OIL IS AT STAKE, AND EXPLORATION IS STILL IN EARLY STAGE. THUS THEY HAVE TIME FOR FURTHER ASSESSMENT AND MANEUVERING. FURTHERMORE, SUBSTANCE OF THIS DISPUTE (AS DISTINCT FROM NATIONALISTIC SENTIMENTS SURROUNDING IT) IS EMINENTLY NEGOTIABLE AND LENDS ITSELF TO LEGAL APPROACH.

3. UNFORTUNATELY, PRESS IN BOTH GREECE AND TURKEY IS BUSILY AGITATING OLD ANIMOSITIES, AND OPPOSITION POLITICIANS HERE ARE BEGINNING TO STRIKE NATIONALISTIC POSTURES. AGITATION MAY HAVE SOME UTILITY IN WARNING OPPONENTS AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY THAT DISPUTE IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. HOWEVER, THIS IS SAME PROCESS THAT, IN CYPRUS CRISES DURING SIXTIES, LED TO PERILOUS RESTRICTIONS ON BOTH GOVERNMENTS' FREEDOM TO NEGOTIATE AND BROUGHT THEM CLOSE TO IRRATIONAL STEPS. SAME EFFECT COULD BE PRODUCED AGAIN.

4. SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF PROBLEM THAT CAUSE US CONCERN ARE:

A. BOTH GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN IN OFFICE ONLY A SHORT TIME, HAVE PREPONDERANCE OF MEMBERS WITHOUT EXPERIENCE IN HIGH OFFICE, AND ARE UNCERTAIN (IN VARYING DEGREES) OF THEIR POPULAR SUPPORT.

B. COMING EVENTS WILL ADD TO TENSIONS: TURKEY EXPECTS TO BEGIN OIL PROSPECTING IN AEGEAN IN JUNE, SAME MONTH IN WHICH, WE GATHER, LOCAL ELECTIONS IN CYPRUS COULD RAISE FRESH DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN GREEK AND TURKISH CYPRIOTS AND BETWEEN NICOSIA AND THENS.

C. CYPRUS ISSUE COULD HEAT UP AND MAKE AEGEAN OIL DISPUTE MUCH HARDER TO MANAGE; OR TURKEY COULD BECOME CONVINCED THAT GREECE IS LINKING TWO ISSUES, WITH SAME EFFECT.

D. SPECULATION HAS SURFACED IN TURKISH PRESS THAT GREEK
SECRET

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PAGE 03 ANKARA 02684 091212Z

ARMED FORCES MAY BELIEVE THAT PATTERN OF YOM KIPPUR WAR--
SURPRISE ATTACK FOLLOWED BY CEASE-FIRE--COULD BE
APPLIED TO OFFSET TURKEY" MILITARY SUPERIORITY.

E. WHILE BOTH SIDES ARE CURRENTLY BEHAVING RATIONALLY,
BOTH HAVE LONG DEMONSTRATED THEIR CAPACITY TO MISCALCULATE
PROVACATIVENESS OF THEIR ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS.

5. WE BELIEVE SOME THOUGHTS ARE IN ORDER CONCERNING U.S. STANCE TOWARD WHAT COULD BE PROTRACTED PERIOD OF TENSION IN TURKISH-GREEK RELATIONS:

A. SINCE TWO PARTIES ARE WILLING EXPLORE A SETTLEMENT BILATERALLY AND ARE NOT NOW SEEKING TO INVOLVE OTHER PARTIES, U.S. SHOULD REFRAIN FROM ACTIVE INTERVENTION AT THIS STAGE. U.S. SHOULD, AS AND IF APPROPRIATE, MAKE CLEAR OUR HOPE THAT PARTIES WILL PURSUE EVERY POSSIBILITY FOR SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THEMSELVES, AND THAT ISSUES OF AEGEAN OIL AND CYPRUS WILL NOT BE MIXED. ALS, U.S. SHOULD CONTINUE KEEPING BOTH SIDES WELL INFORMED OF CURRENT PREPARATIONS FOR CARACAS CONFERENCE ON LAW OF THE SEA, ENCOURAGING BOTH TO MAKE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION.

B. BEARING IN MIND PAST EFFECTIVENESS OF TURKISH MILITARY STRENGTH IN RESTRAINING HELLENIC AMBITIONS, U.S. SHOULD MAKE NO STATEMENT THAT MIGHT ENCOURAGE GOG TO BELIEVE THAT U.S. COULD PREVENT OR COULD RAPIDLY STOP TURKISH RETALIATION FOR ARMED ATTACK.

C. U.S. SHOULD FEEL OUT OTHER NATO ALLIES BILATERALLY ON FEASIBILITY AND ESIRABILITY OF ASSIGNING NATO SECRETARY GENERAL --AT SOME POINT-- A "WATCHING BRIEF" ON AEGEAN OIL DISPUTE PARALLEL TO ONE HE NOW HOLDS ON CYPRUS PROBLEM.

D. U.S. SHOULD DO WHAT IT CAN TO FOSTER MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACT BETWEEN GENERAL OFFICERS OF TURKISH AND GREEK ARMED FORCES IN NATO CONTEXT. AS ONE SUGGESTION, CINCSOUTH MIGHT PROPOSE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE TO REVIEW CHANGING STRATEGIC SITUATION IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN IN LIGHT OF IMMIMENT REOPENING OF SUEZ CANAL.
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